

effort to express the sense of this Congress that we will remember our friendships and that we will honor those relationships, that we do understand the importance of the future and the past as we consider who we will spend our time with. And we as a Nation must understand that our government's actions are reflecting every day a value system. Those value systems should reflect what we, the American people, would have, not what seems politically correct or convenient at the moment.

That is not the way I want to be judged, and I don't think it is the way that people in this House want to be judged. I urge all Members to support this resolution to send a loud message to our friends in Taiwan that we do remember you and we do welcome you.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. Mr. Speaker, I commend the gentleman from New Mexico (Mr. PEARCE) for his eloquent statement in support of this resolution.

Mr. TANCREDO. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of House Concurrent Resolution 136. ...

This common-sense legislation is long overdue.

This resolution will help open the lines of communication between government leaders in Taiwan, and their counterparts here in the United States.

The resolution makes it clear once again that the U.S. Department of State that they should not take actions to prevent high level exchanges between the government of Taiwan and the government of the United States. I say "again" because Federal law already makes it clear that high ranking Taiwanese officials are already explicitly authorized to visit the United States.

Public Law 103-416 says that the President of Taiwan or any other high-level should be admitted for discussions with U.S. government officials about important policy issues unless he or she is excludable under the immigration laws of the United States.

Unfortunately, like so many other laws this Congress has passed, is simply ignored by the State Department. The Department seems more interested in complying with communist China's demands than in following the laws made by this democratically elected Congress.

As a result of this defiance, it has become nearly impossible for President Chen, Vice President Annette Lu and other high ranking Taiwanese officials travel to Washington, DC even for routine meetings with administration officials. Instead, these officials are often confined to cities far from the Nation's Capital, and often only then as a point of transit en route to another country. This is unconscionable.

Mr. Speaker, we host all kinds of foreign leaders in Washington because a two-way dialogue is important for maintaining and improving our cultural, economic—and yes—security interests around the world. Keeping an open channel with our democratic allies in Taiwan is part of that process.

I am pleased that my friend Mr. CHABOT has worked so hard to bring this bill to the floor today. And I strongly support his efforts to help improve our communication with our friends and allies in Taiwan.

Mr. CHABOT. Mr. Speaker, it's very unfortunate that we have to come back year after

year to urge that restrictions should be lifted for high-level visits by appointed and democratically elected leaders of Taiwan.

Our misguided Taiwan policy is nothing new. The so-called "One China" policy is a bipartisan mistake—begun in the Nixon-Kissinger era and exacerbated by President Carter's abrogation of our Mutual Defense Treaty in 1980. It continues to this day.

Just last week, dozens of Members of Congress welcomed Taiwan's Democrat Progressive Party's nominee for the Presidency, Mr. Frank Hsieh, to our Nation's Capitol. There was a little gallows humor at the gathering because, in fact, if Mr. Hsieh wins the election next year, he will no longer be able to come to visit with his friends in Washington, D.C.

Our insulting policy toward our democratic friend and ally should be cast aside to reflect the reality of our strong relationship with Taiwan. Taiwan is a vibrant democracy of some 23,000,000. It is our 8th largest trading partner and the world's 18th largest economy. The Taiwanese people enjoy a full range of freedoms not enjoyed on the other side of the Taiwan Strait—freedom of religion, freedom of the press, and freedom to elect all of their leaders.

Taiwan is a model for young democracies and a great friend to the United States. We should recognize that friendship by abandoning our insulting policy on high level visits and welcoming our Taiwanese friends with open arms. It is the right thing to do.

I urge support of the resolution.

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H. Con. Res. 136 which expresses the sense of Congress that restrictions on visits to the United States by high-level elected officials from Taiwan—including the President of Taiwan—should be lifted. And I thank my friend, Mr. CHABOT of Ohio, for introducing this important resolution.

Taiwan is without a doubt one of the most important allies of the United States in the Asia Pacific region. Taiwan is a rising economic power and has consistently ranked as one of the top ten U.S. export markets. In 2005, U.S.—Taiwan bilateral trade totaled \$57 billion. In addition, our political ties with Taiwan have become ever more important in a world where China is increasing its global reach.

I am the Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere. In Central America and the Caribbean, I have seen China continue to expand its presence while Taiwan becomes increasingly isolated. Given these realities in our own hemisphere, I believe that we must work closely with Taiwan to increase its global visibility and membership in international organizations when it is strategically and politically feasible.

Given our strong political and economic relationship, it would seem inconceivable that we would place restrictions on high-level elected officials of Taiwan during their visits to the United States. Taiwan is a key U.S. ally which is trying hard to maintain its international position, and we should give Taiwan our strong support. I commend Mr. CHABOT for introducing this important resolution and hope that Congress can work closely with the Bush Administration to ensure that these restrictions are actually removed.

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from American Samoa (Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution, H. Con. Res. 136, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the concurrent resolution, as amended, was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

SENSE OF HOUSE THAT JAPAN SHOULD APOLOGIZE FOR ITS IMPERIAL ARMED FORCE'S COERCION OF YOUNG WOMEN INTO SEXUAL SLAVERY

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 121) expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that the Government of Japan should formally acknowledge, apologize, and accept historical responsibility in a clear and unequivocal manner for its Imperial Armed Force's coercion of young women into sexual slavery, known to the world as "comfort women", during its colonial and wartime occupation of Asia and the Pacific Islands from the 1930s through the duration of World War II, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 121

Whereas the Government of Japan, during its colonial and wartime occupation of Asia and the Pacific Islands from the 1930s through the duration of World War II, officially commissioned the acquisition of young women for the sole purpose of sexual servitude to its Imperial Armed Forces, who became known to the world as *ianfu* or "comfort women";

Whereas the "comfort women" system of forced military prostitution by the Government of Japan, considered unprecedented in its cruelty and magnitude, included gang rape, forced abortions, humiliation, and sexual violence resulting in mutilation, death, or eventual suicide in one of the largest cases of human trafficking in the 20th century;

Whereas some new textbooks used in Japanese schools seek to downplay the "comfort women" tragedy and other Japanese war crimes during World War II;

Whereas Japanese public and private officials have recently expressed a desire to dilute or rescind the 1993 statement by Chief Cabinet Secretary Yohei Kono on the "comfort women", which expressed the Government's sincere apologies and remorse for their ordeal;

Whereas the Government of Japan did sign the 1921 International Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Women and Children and supported the 2000 United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security which recognized the unique impact on women of armed conflict;

Whereas the House of Representatives commends Japan's efforts to promote human security, human rights, democratic values, and rule of law, as well as for being a supporter of Security Council Resolution 1325;

Whereas the United States-Japan alliance is the cornerstone of United States security interests in Asia and the Pacific and is fundamental to regional stability and prosperity;

Whereas, despite the changes in the post-cold war strategic landscape, the United States-Japan alliance continues to be based on shared vital interests and values in the Asia-Pacific region, including the preservation and promotion of political and economic freedoms, support for human rights and democratic institutions, and the securing of prosperity for the people of both countries and the international community;

Whereas the House of Representatives commends those Japanese officials and private citizens whose hard work and compassion resulted in the establishment in 1995 of Japan's private Asian Women's Fund;

Whereas the Asian Women's Fund has raised \$5,700,000 to extend "atonement" from the Japanese people to the comfort women; and

Whereas the mandate of the Asian Women's Fund, a government-initiated and largely government-funded private foundation whose purpose was the carrying out of programs and projects with the aim of atonement for the maltreatment and suffering of the "comfort women", came to an end on March 31, 2007, and the Fund has been disbanded as of that date: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That it is the sense of the House of Representatives that the Government of Japan—

(1) should formally acknowledge, apologize, and accept historical responsibility in a clear and unequivocal manner for its Imperial Armed Forces' coercion of young women into sexual slavery, known to the world as "comfort women", during its colonial and wartime occupation of Asia and the Pacific Islands from the 1930s through the duration of World War II;

(2) would help to resolve recurring questions about the sincerity and status of prior statements if the Prime Minister of Japan were to make such an apology as a public statement in his official capacity;

(3) should clearly and publicly refute any claims that the sexual enslavement and trafficking of the "comfort women" for the Japanese Imperial Armed Forces never occurred; and

(4) should educate current and future generations about this horrible crime while following the recommendations of the international community with respect to the "comfort women".

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS) and the gentleman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the resolution under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of this resolution, and I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, let me first commend my good friend and our distinguished

colleague, the gentleman from California (Mr. HONDA), for introducing this very important resolution and for all his hard work to give voice to the so-called "comfort women."

Mr. Speaker, the true strength of a nation is tested when it is forced to confront the darkest chapters in its history. Will it have the courage to face up to the truth of its own past, or will it run from that truth in the foolish hope that truth will fade with time.

The Government of Japan's unwillingness to offer a formal and unequivocal apology to the women forced by its Army to be sex slaves during World War II stands in stark contrast to Japan's positive role in the world today. Japan is a proud global leader and a valued ally of the United States, which makes its unwillingness to account honestly for this part of its past all the more perplexing.

The U.S.-Japan relationship, Mr. Speaker, is the bedrock of peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region. Our reliance and friendship are based on mutual respect and admiration. And together, we have helped promote our shared values of democracy, economic opportunity and human rights throughout Asia. Yet Japan's refusal to make an official government apology once and for all to the women who suffered as so-called "comfort women" is disturbing to everyone who values the U.S.-Japan relationship.

No nation can disregard its own past, neither the actions of a few nor the actions of many. Inhumane deeds should be fully acknowledged, a spotlight shined on the whole truth. This is essential to national reconciliation, and it helps the victims to heal. Withholding that acknowledgment only compounds the cruelty.

□ 1445

Post-war Germany, with the most horrendous crimes in its history, made the right choice. Japan, on the other hand, has actively promoted historical amnesia.

The facts, Mr. Speaker, are plain. There can be no denying that the Japanese Imperial military coerced thousands upon thousands of Asian women, primarily Chinese and Koreans, into sexual slavery during the Second World War.

The continued efforts by some in Japan to distort and deny history and play a game of blame-the-victim are nauseating. Those who posit that all of the "comfort women" were happily complicit and acting of their own accord simply don't understand the meaning of the word "rape."

On June 14, members of the Japanese Government took out a shocking advertisement in *The Washington Post* that attempted to smear the survivors of the comfort women system, including those who bravely testified before our own House Foreign Affairs Committee. The ad suggested that these women, who were forcibly and repeatedly raped by soldiers, were engaged in

"licensed prostitution that was commonplace around the world at the time." This is a ludicrous and infuriating assertion.

Our resolution calls on the Government of Japan officially to acknowledge and to apologize for the appalling acts that Imperial Japan committed against the so-called "comfort women." It seeks admission of an appalling truth. Failure to do so would signal to others around the globe that such horrors can be perpetrated again and treated just as cavalierly as they have been in this case.

But most importantly, Mr. Speaker, it speaks out for the victims of this monstrous system who were terrorized and brutalized by men at war. It gives voice to these courageous women whom others have tried to silence through shame, bigotry, and threats of further violence.

It is appropriate that this House stand up for these women who ask only that the truth be honored. The world awaits a full reckoning of history from the Japanese Government.

I strongly support this resolution, and I urge all of my colleagues to do the same.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I rise also in support of this resolution, which strikes an important balance, protecting the integrity of history and recognizing present-day reality. It also addresses an issue of great significance for the peoples of the Asia Pacific region.

The tragedy of the "comfort women," the thousands of Asian and European women forced into sexual slavery by the Imperial Japanese Army during the first half of the 20th century, was a horrific crime. For the surviving "comfort women" these issues are not historical; they are profoundly personal. Some of them were in our Foreign Affairs Committee when this bill was marked up. Attempts to deny or minimize these facts are a disservice to future generations.

The case of Darfur, which we spoke about earlier today, Mr. Speaker, reminds us all that the issue of the use of military force to abuse women, to abuse children through rape and exploitation is one which we need to look at and one which unfortunately continues to this very day.

At the same time, the resolution makes clear that Japan has been a vital ally of the United States and a generous benefactor of the international community through several decades. It has been a strong ally of the United States on issues relating to, for example, nonproliferation.

It was recently reported that three Japanese banks have stopped engaging in any new business with Iran and that Japanese financial institutions are restricting loans and rejecting an Iranian request to pay for oil imports in currency other than dollars.

So we are proud of the U.S.-Japan alliance and grateful for the friendship of the people of Japan. At the same time, we should also recognize that the issue of unresolved historic grievances from the Pacific war is one that cannot be ignored. It is through reconciliation of these issues that our Asian allies can work constructively together, as is the case with our European allies, and the achievement of regional harmony is in America's vital national security interests.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 5 minutes to my good friend and our distinguished colleague from California (Mr. HONDA), the principal author of this important resolution.

Mr. HONDA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express my unconditional and heartfelt support for those euphemistically known to the world as "comfort women."

Let me at the outset thank Chairman LANTOS; the vice chair of the subcommittee, ENI FALCOMA; and the ranking member, ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN. I really appreciate your support and your strong, clear statements.

Today, the House will make history as we consider the passage of H. Res. 121, a resolution I introduced which seeks an official apology for what the "comfort women" endured under Japan's Imperial Armed Forces during World War II.

On this day, I must recognize my good friend and mentor and former colleague, Representative Lane Evans, whose irreproachable character gave these women hope. The legacy of his spirit has remained with me throughout this incredible journey, during which it has been my personal honor to have carried this torch, and I know that his spirit is with me today too. If he is watching, I would like to thank him for his unparalleled courage and tireless efforts to bring justice and the restoration of dignity to the "comfort women" survivors. Lane, *semper fi*.

I would also like to recognize Ms. Lee Yong-Soo, a survivor of the comfort stations who is here today with us. Ms. Lee has been a stalwart and passionate advocate for herself and her fellow survivors.

On February 15 of this year, Ms. Lee was joined by Ms. Jan Ruff-O'Herne and Ms. Kim Koon-Ja as witnesses in a hearing before the Asia, the Pacific and Global Environment Subcommittee, chaired by my good friend ENI FALCOMA. I would also like to thank him and Chairman TOM LANTOS for their outspoken support for these women.

The survivors' riveting and gut-wrenching testimony about the horrors they endured as former "comfort women" brought us all to tears and impacted me profoundly. Their courage and indomitable spirit will continue to inspire me every day.

Mr. Speaker, today the House will send a message to the Government of

Japan that it should deliver an official, unequivocal, unambiguous apology for the indignity the "comfort women" suffered.

Too many times we've seen women victimized by war and conflict. The experience of these women is a vivid reminder that the human rights of women around the world are never fully secure. We know that rape, sexual abuse and sometimes murder of women and girls in war are still committed by armies in various countries. One thinks of Darfur, Bosnia, and East Timor.

We must teach future generations that we cannot allow this to happen.

Mr. Speaker, encouraging our good friend and ally, the Government of Japan, to officially and unequivocally apologize is, in my mind, my heart and the minds and hearts of all those concerned about protecting human rights, the right thing to do.

I have always believed that reconciliation is the first step in the healing process, and I am proud to be here today on this truly historic occasion to continue to advocate with every fabric of my being for that principle.

I urge my colleagues to join me in support of protecting and defending the human rights of "comfort women" by voting "yes" on H. Res. 121.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. TOM DAVIS).

Mr. TOM DAVIS of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H. Res. 121. I want to thank Mr. HONDA, the chief sponsor for this legislation, Chairman LANTOS, Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN, Mr. FALCOMA and others who have helped bring this to the floor.

This resolution is long overdue. I'm a proud cosponsor of this resolution because it is time for these women to tell their story to the world. It is time for the world to know how horribly humans can treat other humans in times of war and conflict, and it is time for the Government of Japan to own up to the wrongs that it committed toward these women.

During World War II, between 100,000 and 200,000 women were abducted from their homes in Japan and occupied lands, including Korea and China and the Philippines, and forced into the sex trade for the benefit of the Japanese Army. To deny this tragedy is to allow it to happen again. We prevent history from repeating itself only when we actually learn from history, not when we try to deny and obfuscate the truth.

When U.S. Government placed Americans of Japanese descent into internment camps in World War II, we were wrong; and we have since apologized to the families of those victims. This is the measure of responsible leadership. When we implore our friends across the Pacific to apologize for their many mistakes, we ask for no more than what we as Americans are willing to do ourselves.

Japan has been a strong ally of the United States for years, and I believe

both countries have benefited greatly from that relationship. However, it is a true friend that will tell another when it is wrong, and I believe the United States has an obligation as an ally to Japan to stand up against this atrocity and to reveal to the world in appropriate fashion.

It is time for the stories of the "comfort women" to be told. It is because these courageous women are speaking out and refusing to be silenced that the United States and the world can finally learn why this issue is so important and why we must never allow it to be repeated ever again on this planet.

I urge support for this resolution.

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 5 minutes to my good friend, the distinguished chairman of the Subcommittee of Asia, the Pacific and the Global Environment, ENI FALCOMA.

(Mr. FALCOMA asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. FALCOMA. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the distinguished chairman of our House Foreign Affairs Committee, my good friend and chairman, TOM LANTOS, and also our senior ranking member, Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN, for their leadership and efforts in bringing H. Res. 121 to the floor today.

I also want to thank our colleagues, and the gentleman from California especially as the chief sponsor of this legislation, which has the support of some 146 Members, both Republicans and Democrats, fully supporting the provisions of this resolution.

I also want to note, this resolution was previously passed by the International Relations Committee in the last Congress, under the able leadership of our previous chairman, the gentleman from Illinois, Mr. HYDE.

And I would be remiss if I did not also mention the name of another gentleman from Illinois, my good friend Mr. Lane Evans, who was also a champion of this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, H. Res. 121 seeks to express the sense of the U.S. House of Representatives that the Government of Japan should formally acknowledge, apologize and accept historical responsibility in a clear and unequivocal manner for its Imperial Armed Forces coercion of teenage girls and young women into a sexual slavery, euphemistically known as "comfort women," system during its colonial and wartime occupation of Asia and the Pacific islands from the late 1930s throughout the duration of World War II.

On February 7 of this year, the Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Asia, the Pacific and the Global Environment held a hearing on H. Res. 121, the first time ever in the history of the United States Congress that three surviving "comfort women" testified for the record.

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Ms. Lee Yong-Soo is with us today, and I want to especially commend her and Ms. Koon Kim Lee and

Ms. Jan Ruff O'Herne for their courage and their faith and their belief that one day their story would be told and, in part, their suffering would be set right.

I encourage the world to read their moving testimony, which has brought us to this moment when the United States of America will stand arm in arm with these noble women in demanding an official apology from the Government of Japan.

The comfort women system organized, managed and administered by the Imperial Army of Japan is considered one of the 20th century's most extensive cases of human trafficking and ignored violations of human rights. It was unprecedented in its cruelty and magnitude as teenage girls and young women were raped, systematically beaten, tortured, drugged, mutilated and sometimes even murdered.

According to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, soldiers of the Japanese Imperial Army abducted and forced some 200,000 young teenage girls and young women from Korea, from China, from the Philippines, from Indonesia, from the Dutch Indies, and other women, forced them into sexual enslavement and abuse.

Today the Government of Japan contends that it has apologized and accepted responsibility for its atrocities. But it wasn't until 1980s and the 1990s that major publications in Japan began to describe the details of the comfort women, and it also wasn't until 1992 in response to these developments that Japan's Chief Secretary, cabinet secretary, Yahei Kono, issued an official statement. After a 2-year period, the foreign ministry of Japan conducted this research, and it did make the admission.

I would include for the RECORD the full statement of Chief Secretary Kono regarding the 2-year study by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

In 1993, after a two-year study by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, under the supervision of the Chief Secretary of Cabinet, an equivalent to the Chief-of-Staff of the White House, Mr. Yahei Kono stated:

The Government of Japan has been conducting a study on the issue of wartime "comfort women" since December 1991. I wish to announce the findings as a result of that study.

As a result of the study which indicates that comfort stations were operated in extensive areas for long periods, it is apparent that there existed a great number of comfort women. Comfort stations were operated in response to the request of the military authorities of the day. The then Japanese military was, directly or indirectly, involved in the establishment and management of the comfort stations and the transfer of comfort women. The recruitment of the comfort women was conducted mainly by private recruiters who acted in response to the request of the military. The Government study has revealed that in many cases they were recruited against their own will, through coaxing coercion, etc., and that, at times, administrative/military personnel directly took part in the recruitments. They lived in mis-

ery at comfort stations under a coercive atmosphere.

As to the origin of those comfort women who were transferred to the war areas, excluding those from Japan, those from the Korean Peninsula accounted for a large part. The Korean Peninsula was under Japanese rule in those days, and their recruitment, transfer, control, etc., were conducted generally against their will, through coaxing, coercion, etc.

Undeniably, this was an act, with the involvement of the military authorities of the day, that severely injured the honor and dignity of many women. The Government of Japan would like to take this opportunity once again to extend its sincere apologies and remorse to all those, irrespective of place of origin, who suffered immeasurable pain and incurable physical and psychological wounds as comfort women.

It is incumbent upon us, the Government of Japan, to continue to consider seriously, while listening to the views of learned circles, how best we can express this sentiment.

We shall face squarely the historical facts as described above instead of evading them, and take them to heart as lessons of history. We hereby reiterated our firm determination never to repeat the same mistake by forever engraving such issues in our memories through the study and teaching of history.

As actions have been brought to court in Japan and interests have been shown in this issue outside Japan, the Government of Japan shall continue to pay full attention to this matter, including private researched related thereto.

The Kono statement is often cited as Japan's official apology, although it was never endorsed officially by any of Japan's prime ministers and members of cabinets. At the time the chief cabinet secretary was considered part press secretary, part chief of staff but never an official member of cabinet, nor can he ever present himself as an acting prime minister.

2001, Prime Minister Koizumi issued a statement. However, only statements approved by the cabinet and not the prime minister, are a definitive expression of government policy in Japan. Without the approval of the cabinet, all declarations of contrition are considered only personal views.

I want to close my statement and to say this: Someone once said, "The greatness of a nation is not necessarily measured by its accomplishments, by its ability, but by its ability to face honestly its mistakes of the past and then take appropriate action to correct them."

I sincerely hope that this will be taken seriously by our good friends and the leadership of the Government of Japan.

I urge my colleagues to support this resolution.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank Chairman TOM LANTOS of the Committee on Foreign Affairs and our Senior Ranking Member, Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN, for their leadership and efforts in bringing H. Res. 121 to the floor today. I also want to thank our colleague, the gentleman from California, Mr. HONDA, for his sponsorship of this bill which has the bipartisan support of some 146 Members of the U.S. House of Representatives.

I also want to make note that this resolution was previously passed by the International

Relations Committee in the last Congress under the able leadership of our previous Chairman, the gentleman from Illinois, Mr. Henry Hyde. I would be remiss if I did not also mention the name of our former colleague and friend, Mr. Lane Evans also from Illinois, who championed this bill for years.

Mr. Speaker, H. Res. 121 seeks to express the sense of the U.S. House of Representatives that the Government of Japan should formally acknowledge, apologize, and accept historical responsibility in a clear and unequivocal manner for its Imperial Armed Force's coercion of teenage girls and young women into sexual slavery, euphemistically known as the "comfort women" system, during its colonial and wartime occupation of Asia and the Pacific Islands from 1930s and through the duration of World War II.

On February 15, 2007, the Foreign Affairs' Subcommittee on Asia, the Pacific and Global Environment held a hearing on H. Res. 121, and, for the first time ever in the history of the U.S. Congress, three surviving comfort women testified for the record.

Ms. Young Soo Lee is with us today and I want to especially commend her and Ms. Koon Kim and Ms. Jan Ruff O'Herne for their courage and their faith and their belief that one day their story would be told and, in part, their suffering would be set right. I encourage the world to read their moving testimony which has brought us to this moment when the United States of America will stand arm in arm with these noble women in demanding an official apology from the Government of Japan.

The "comfort women" system, organized, managed and administered by the Imperial Army of Japan, is considered to be one of the 20th century's most extensive cases of human trafficking and ignored violations of human rights. It was unprecedented in its cruelty and magnitude as teen-age girls and young women were systematically raped, beaten, tortured, drugged, mutilated, and sometimes murdered. According to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, soldiers of the Japanese Imperial Army, abducted and forced some 200,000 young teenage girls and young women from Korea, China, the Philippines, Indonesian, Dutch, and other women—forced them into sexual enslavement and abuse.

Today, the Government of Japan contends that it has apologized and accepted responsibility for its atrocities. But it wasn't until the 1980s and 1990s that major publications in Japan began to describe the details of the "comfort women" system and that countries occupied by Japan also began to speak out about it. I wasn't until 1992, in response to these developments, that Japan's Chief Cabinet Secretary Yohei Kono issued a statement.

This "Kono Statement" is often cited as Japan's official apology although it was never endorsed officially by any of Japan's prime ministers and their cabinets. At the time, the Chief Cabinet Secretary was considered part Press Secretary, part Chief of Staff, and never an official member of Cabinet, nor can he ever present himself as an Acting Prime Minister.

In 2001, Prime Minister Koizumi issued a statement. However, only statements approved by the Cabinet, not the Prime Minister, are a definitive expression of government policy in Japan. Without the approval of the Cabinet, all declarations of contrition are considered only personal views.

Interestingly, as this topic has gained widespread attention as result of February's hearing, both the Japanese government and press have ignored the fact that Members of Congress now understand both Japan's legislative system and history of the Comfort Women tragedy. We are not ignorant, as some reporters have suggested. We know what does and does not constitute an official apology. We are also aware of the propaganda being churned out by the Japanese press intent on revising history by denying the validity of the "Comfort Women" controversy.

This year, Prime Minister Abe denied the existence of sexual slave camps. Then he retracted his statement because of pressure from leaders of the Asia-Pacific region. Now he says that he "respects" the finding of the Kono Report of 1993. What does this mean?

I have a special love and affinity for the people of Japan. But more sacred to me is our obligation to emphasize the fact a systematic abduction and raping and abuse of women as a weapon of war is totally unacceptable, and I believe the people of Japan agree. In fact, it can be argued that H. Res. 121 reflects the will of the Japanese people. In the only survey that the Japanese press appears to have published on the Comfort Women issue, in 2001, Fuji TV's Hodo asked respondents if they thought Japan has apologized sufficiently. 43.8 percent answered no, 37.2 percent answered yes.

Some may say the past is the past and that the U.S. is also an offender and violator of human rights. Maybe this is so. But nowhere in recorded history has the U.S. military command as a matter of policy issued a directives allowing for the coercion of teenage girls and young women into sexual slavery or forced prostitution. On the other hand, this is exactly what the Japanese military high command did and it is an affront to truth for any government to downplay its history.

Civilized society cannot allow history to be revised or denied under any circumstances. Regardless of what bearing this, or any other issue, may have on bilateral relations, or U.S. foreign policy, civilized society has a moral obligation to remember, to give voice to those who have suffered, to pay living tribute to victims past and present, to defend human rights. Otherwise we run the risk of holocaust.

Today, I want to commend my colleagues for their support and to call upon the Prime Minister of Japan and his Cabinet to issue a formal apology. No amount of money, not even payments set up by private Japanese contributions or the Asian Women's Fund, can atone for the suffering of the thousands of women victimized at the hands of Japan's Imperial Forces before and during, World War II.

While I support any woman's right to lay claim to these funds, I do not believe the Japanese government should suggest that a monetary payment can make right a moral wrong. So, for me, any and all discussions about the Asian Women's Fund sufficing as an act of apology falls short of what is relevant.

What is relevant is that Japan acknowledge, apologize, and accept historical responsibility for its Imperial Armed Force's coercion of teenage girls and young women into sexual slavery during its occupation of Asia and the Pacific Islands during WWII.

Mr. Speaker, I want to conclude by sharing with my colleagues this statement—someone once said that, "The greatness of a nation is

not necessarily measured by its accomplishments, but by its ability to face honestly its mistakes of the past, and then take appropriate action to correct them."

Again, Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this resolution.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from New Mexico (Mr. PEARCE).

Mr. PEARCE. I thank the gentlelady from Florida for yielding time and also thank Mr. LANTOS.

Mr. Speaker, we have to ask ourselves exactly why would we be interested in this particular thing today. Some might claim that it's an old circumstance, that it existed too far in the past. Others might say that it simply is not our right, not our position, to enter into the discussion.

As far as it being too far in the past, many times I go into the district of New Mexico, the Second District of New Mexico, and I bump into people from the Vietnam era, people my age. I was there in the 1970s, I flew in Vietnam. Many, many have hearts broken by the way a Nation treated them, and just a word of encouragement, just a word of saying welcome home, brother, brings tears that flow down men and women's cheeks from long ago past.

We have a responsibility to impact those circumstances which were not right, which were not just, and no better person than Mr. LANTOS to be talking about this today, because he understands that. He's a steady, quiet voice for reason. Regarding Ms. LEE, who is with us today, I would remember the words of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, who said that the simple step of a courageous individual is not to take part in the lie. One word of truth outweighs the entire world.

He went on in that same talk to say that one person of truth impacts the whole world. So I think that we are called to quietly visit with our friends, the Japanese, and I think they are very good friends. I think that we, as good friends, should quietly say, Friend, it's time to acknowledge; it's time to apologize; it's time to speak. Because the healing just doesn't occur on the recipient's part, on those persons who were wronged; the healing begins in the heart of those who have perpetrated the actions. Admission brings a certain humbleness that each one of us begins to recognize that we are not above righteousness, we are not above rightness, that we are not above justice, truth. No single one of us is.

So if we find ourselves at this curious point saying to a long-time trusted friend, It's time to acknowledge; it's time to apologize; it's time to recognize what we have done and to change, it's not a very harsh statement. It's not one taken in anger, but it is one taken with the noblest of objectives, and that is the recognition and the healing of a long-overdue act.

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the distinguished colleague from California (Ms. WOOLSEY), a member of the Foreign Affairs Committee.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of House Resolution 121, and I thank my colleague, MIKE HONDA, for his leadership on this issue.

I particularly thank Representative Lane Evans, who was with us up until this year, and I hope he is watching today, because he was right when he first introduced this legislation, and his reasons and his legislation remains correct and right today.

Many may claim that the exploitation of the comfort women should be left in the past. That could not be further from the truth. Anyone who has met these brave women knows that they live with the haunting memories in the present every single day. The sexual exploitation, some would say enslavement, must be marked, and it must be remembered. The acts of violence the comfort women faced were inhuman, and it cannot be erased.

This should not be a day of sadness. Today is about accountability and hope for the future. We will remember that those who did not live to see this day and, yet, are still celebrated for their courage. In their honor, we will speak for all of the world here: Never again.

The lesson will be learned. Women are not prizes of war. This has been a long time coming, but there is no statute of limitations on courage and on dignity, and that is what we honor today. We honor the perseverance of comfort women. We call on governments worldwide to accept responsibility for past deeds and work towards a just future.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of our time.

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 3 minutes to my good friend from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE), a distinguished member of the Foreign Affairs Committee.

(Ms. JACKSON-LEE asked and was given permission to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. I thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I thank the ranking member of this committee for creating the forum to recognize atrocities that many have tried to forget.

Let me thank Mr. HONDA, the moving force of this legislation and the chairman of the Subcommittee on Asia, for his leadership, and I am so glad we have all mentioned Lane Evans because of the spirit and the enthusiasm and the determination in which he authored this legislation earlier before he left Congress.

Let me also speak to Ms. LEE, who remains as a steadfast anchor for all the women who cannot speak for themselves.

Mr. Speaker, I want to take a different approach. I hope that people do not take lightly what acknowledgment, apologies and accepting historical responsibility means. This is about sexual slavery.

I ask my colleagues to just think that if we were addressing the question

today, which we have done in our Foreign Affairs Committee on sexual slavery, the holding of women, the debasing of women, the degrading of women, would most of us be rushing to the floor of the House to be able to condemn those actions that might be around us and around the world?

This is no less degrading, and its historical perspective does not diminish the responsibility of Japan and of this Congress to be able to say to these comfort women, women who were sexual slaves, that we apologize or ask Japan to apologize and hold the nation historically accountable for those actions.

Do you know that today textbooks in Japan, many of them diminish the actions of Japan and the activities that held the comfort women? These were women engaged in sexual activities allegedly to give comfort to the military.

So I would simply say, having gone through a number of debates about apologies regarding slavery in America, that apologies do count. It means something for those who have suffered in a way that they can never, never find an expression for.

So I rise today to support H. Res. 121 and place it in a historical context but in the context of today. We know that if any of those issues arise before us, we would stand here in condemnation. The comfort women's plight is no less deserving of our Nation, and, of course, a recognition by Japan that an apology, accountability, will go a long way in soothing the deeply embedded pain for those who no longer live but for those who live and suffer.

I ask my colleagues to support H. Res. 121.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H. Res. 121, which calls on the Government of Japan to formally acknowledge, apologize, and accept historical responsibility for its role in the coercion of young women and girls, euphemistically known to the world as 'comfort women', to serve as sex slaves in Japanese military comfort stations from the 1930s through World War II.

I would especially like to thank Mr. HONDA for his leadership on the issue of 'comfort women' and for his expression of solidarity with these exploited women and urge each and everyone of my colleagues to support this resolution.

Mr. Speaker, as you well know, the friendship and alliance that exists between the United States and Japan establishes stability and prosperity in Asia and the Pacific and is essential to our security interests in that region. This resolution calls on the Government of Japan to strengthen that tie by acknowledging the facts forever enshrined in history and by publicly denouncing these past heinous human rights abuses in one of the largest cases of human trafficking in the 20th century.

Only in recent years have these victims of Imperial Japanese brutality relayed their stories to the world. In fact, just this year, on February 15, 2007, three women who knew firsthand the unequivocal pain, suffering and horror of sexual servitude at the hands of the

Japanese military testified at a subcommittee hearing chaired by Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. These women relayed heartbreaking real life accounts of years of torment, disease, and separation from their families. These women are still plagued today by the physical and emotional scars of the horrendous human rights abuses committed against them.

On April 26 of this year, my good friend and the former chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee, Henry Hyde and I co-authored an op-ed in the Washington Times urging 'the Japanese people to courageously acknowledge and redress the wrongs perpetuated by Imperial Japan' on these women and 'to come to grips' with the history of their past. In light of Japan's recent wavering on the accuracy of historical fact regarding comfort women, I stand with my colleagues in urging the Japanese Government to very clearly acknowledge, apologize, and accept historical responsibility in a clear, unequivocal manner for its Imperial Armed Forces' coercion of young women into sexual slavery.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H. Res. 121, which calls on the Government of Japan to accept formal historical responsibility for one of the darkest chapters of World War II history in Asia and the Pacific, the Japanese military's use of "comfort women", the practice of coercion of young women into sexual slavery.

I would first like to acknowledge our distinguished colleague, Mr. HONDA of California, for introducing this important resolution and for his persistent efforts in giving voice to the victims of these crimes against humanity.

Japan, a loyal ally and one of U.S.' closest partners, plays a critical role in maintaining the geopolitical balance in a still volatile region. The Japanese government's refusal to acknowledge the despicable war-time practice of its Imperial Army known as "comfort women" stands in stark contrasts to the courageous humanitarian stand the Japanese government has taken in a number of humanitarian crises around the world and to its role as guarantor for peace in the region.

Facing up to one of the darkest chapters of its history is a genuine test for the maturity of a nation. In the aftermath of World War II, the German nation and its government found the courage to account for war crimes that the Third Reich committed during the war and occupation.

There can be no denying that the Japanese military committed those crimes involving thousands of women, mostly of Chinese and Korean descent. It is particularly disturbing that some in Japan are still trying to distort the historical record and are denying that these crimes took place. The same parties are going even a step further and blaming the victims for engaging into prostitution.

It is up to this House to call for the Japanese government to set the record straight, not just for the sake of the past, but also because rape has been used across the globe today as a weapon of war. By supporting this resolution we send a strong and unambiguous signal to the Japanese Government to acknowledge its historical responsibility. We will also state Congress' strong condemnation of rape as weapon of war.

While support of the resolution will finally give voice of the numerous victims of these despicable crimes, the Congress' intent is to assure our ally Japan that the resolution aims

at forging the process of healing by facing certain historical experience and is not intended as retribution against a partner and ally.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this important resolution.

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H. Res. 121, the Comfort Women Resolution—a resolution that I have supported since its initial introduction in the 109th Congress.

Beginning in the 1930s, the Imperial Government of Japan orchestrated the enslavement of up to 200,000 young Korean women. Many were abducted from their homes and sent to Japanese military brothels. Others were lured from their homes under the false pretense of employment. In what was one of the worst cases of human trafficking of the 20th century, the trauma that these women suffered drove many to conceal their past, either too embarrassed or scared to speak of it. The surviving victims deserve the recognition that they so desire.

To this day, Japan maintains that this issue is closed and the sufferings of individuals inflicted in the war have already been dealt by treaties normalizing its ties with other Asian countries. Some have pointed to Prime Minister Abe's April 27th statement as a formal apology, yet both the Prime Minister himself and Japan's Foreign Ministry went on record to disavow any alleged apology. It is important that the Japanese government confronts this dark part of Japanese history.

This resolution is as much about today as it is about yesterday. The world's strength to oppose killing today is made greater by accountability, for actions present, but also past. It's weakened by denial of accountability and obfuscation of past acts. History is a continuum that affects today and tomorrow. It's much harder to get tomorrow right if we get yesterday wrong.

I urge my colleagues to support this important resolution.

Mr. GARRETT of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that the House today is considering H. Res. 121 which rightly recognizes the plight of Korean comfort women during the 1930s and World War II. I was proud to co-sponsor this resolution which calls on the nation of Japan to formally recognize and apologize for these crimes.

After the Japanese occupation of Korea in the 1930s, the army forced young women to work in brothels. In some cases kidnapped women were transported overseas for sexual servitude. At the end of World War II, these women were left scarred and in many cases far from home with no resources.

Sadly, there are some in Japan who still insist that the army was not formally involved with these crimes or that the women chose to become involved in prostitution. The evidence clearly demonstrates that this was not the case. It is far past time for the Japanese government to recognize the role the army played in these crimes.

Today, we call on them to apologize to the few women who continue to live with the shame of the crimes committed against them. While the relationship between Korea and Japan has improved as both countries turned into thriving democracies, the issue of the comfort women continues to come between them. I hope that this resolution will promote reconciliation so that both countries can move together into a future of cooperation and friendship.

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, we have no additional requests for time and yield back the balance of our time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. HINOJOSA). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 121, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the resolution, as amended, was agreed to.

The title was amended so as to read: "A resolution expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that the Government of Japan should formally acknowledge, apologize, and accept historical responsibility in a clear and unequivocal manner for its Imperial Armed Forces' coercion of young women into sexual slavery, known to the world as 'comfort women', during its colonial and wartime occupation of Asia and the Pacific Islands from the 1930s through the duration of World War II."

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

URGING THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA TO END THE COMMERCIAL SEAL HUNT

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 427) urging the Government of Canada to end the commercial seal hunt.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 427

Whereas on November 15, 2006, the Government of Canada opened a commercial hunt for seals in the waters off the east coast of Canada;

Whereas an international outcry regarding the plight of the seals hunted in Canada resulted in the 1983 ban by the European Union of whitecoat and blueback seal skins and the subsequent collapse of the commercial seal hunt in Canada;

Whereas the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972 (16 U.S.C. 1361 et seq.) bars the import into the United States of seal products;

Whereas in February 2003, the Ministry of Fisheries and Oceans in Canada authorized the highest quota for harp seals in Canadian history, allowing nearly 1,000,000 seals to be killed over a 3-year period;

Whereas more than 1,000,000 seals have been killed over the past 3 years;

Whereas harp seal pups can legally be hunted in Canada as soon as they have begun to molt their white coats at approximately 12 days of age;

Whereas 95 percent of the seals killed over the past 5 years were pups between just 12 days and 12 weeks of age, many of which had not yet eaten their first solid meal or taken their first swim;

Whereas a report by an independent team of veterinarians invited to observe the hunt by the International Fund for Animal Welfare concluded that the seal hunt failed to comply with basic animal welfare regulations in Canada and that governmental regulations regarding humane killing were not being respected or enforced;

Whereas the veterinary report concluded that as many as 42 percent of the seals studied were likely skinned while alive and conscious;

Whereas the commercial slaughter of seals in the Northwest Atlantic is inherently cruel, whether the killing is conducted by clubbing or by shooting;

Whereas many seals are shot in the course of the hunt, but escape beneath the ice where they die slowly and are never recovered, and these seals are not counted in official kill statistics, making the actual kill level far higher than the level that is reported;

Whereas the commercial hunt for harp and hooded seals is a commercial slaughter carried out almost entirely by non-Native people from the East Coast of Canada for seal fur, oil, and penises (used as aphrodisiacs in some Asian markets);

Whereas the fishing and sealing industries in Canada continue to justify the expanded seal hunt on the grounds that the seals in the Northwest Atlantic are preventing the recovery of cod stocks, despite the lack of any credible scientific evidence to support this claim;

Whereas two Canadian government marine scientists reported in 1994 that the true cause of cod depletion in the North Atlantic was over-fishing, and the consensus among the international scientific community is that seals are not responsible for the collapse of cod stocks;

Whereas harp and hooded seals are a vital part of the complex ecosystem of the Northwest Atlantic, and because the seals consume predators of commercial cod stocks, removing the seals might actually inhibit recovery of cod stocks;

Whereas certain ministries of the Government of Canada have stated clearly that there is no evidence that killing seals will help groundfish stocks to recover; and

Whereas the persistence of this cruel and needless commercial hunt is inconsistent with the well-earned international reputation of Canada: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives urges the Government of Canada to end the commercial hunt on seals.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS) and the gentleman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and to include extraneous material on the resolution under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

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Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of this resolution and yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, we are all familiar with National Geographic images of fluffy white baby seals nestled next to their mothers. We stare at them on our TV screens or in our magazines and reflexively remark about how adorable they are. But now imagine, if you can, the brutal death that awaits hundreds of

thousands of these baby seals every single year. With stunning barbarism, Canadian hunters swoop in with heavy clubs and stun guns to immobilize these little innocent creatures. They are then skinned alive simply so that their soft white fur can adorn winter coats, coats that could be composed of different materials without torturing animals.

These gruesome images are sadly commonplace in the Canadian Northwest. The Canadian Government estimates that over 1 million seals have been killed in the most recent 3-year period. Public outcry over this barbarism led to a ban of all seal products in the United States and in the European Union in 1983. Unfortunately, the public seems to have forgotten that the grisly practices of commercial seal hunters still go on, and international pressure on Canada to end the hunt has abated.

My resolution brings the focus of the United States Congress back to this heinous yearly slaughter. It urges the Canadian Government to cease this gruesome practice and bring Canadian policy in line with that of the United States and the European Union.

Mr. Speaker, let me note that this annual seal slaughter, enacted for mere vanity and vulgar consumerism, is also having deleterious effects on the ecosystem. Nature's careful balance is being thrown off by the depletion of the seal population. The barbaric seal hunt disturbs the food chain, hurting the fishing industry, which is now suffering in Canada.

Ending the commercial seal hunt is not simply a matter of saving beautiful and innocent animals that tug at our hearts. It is a matter of intelligent ecomanagement, prevention of cruelty against animals, and helping our friends to the north restore their otherwise pristine international reputation. Killing baby seals echoes the torture and cruel killing of so many other animals around the world. As cochairman of the Congressional Friends of Animals Caucus, I will continue to bring the world's attention to such practices wherever they exist. I urge all of my colleagues to support this important and humane resolution.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Harp seals, which live off of Canada's east coast, are sought for their pelts. Canadian hunters, who are regulated by Canada's Department of Fisheries and Oceans, have killed almost a million seals in the past 3 years. The government set a quota of 270,000 seals for the season of 2007, which is lower than the limit of 335,000 seals set in last year's season. The quota is determined annually by the department and is set based on estimates of the current seal population. Many concerned citizens are quite upset that these seals are killed in an inhumane way, since many